

Message Text

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TAGS: PINT, CA
SUBJECT: QUEBEC PREMIER LEVESQUE'S SPEECH IN
CHARLOTTETOWN, PEI

1. QUEBEC PREMIER RENE LEVESQUE SPOKE BEFORE A UNIVERSITY OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND AUDIENCE IN CHARLOTTETOWN ON APRIL 18. HE WAS GREETED ON HIS ARRIVAL IN THE AUDITORIUM BY SEVERAL STUDENTS WAVING A LARGE CANADIAN FLAG. THIS WAS FOLLOWED BY THE AUDIENCE SPONTANEOUSLY SINGING THE NATIONAL ANTHEM OF CANADA. HE RESPONDED TO THIS RECEPTION WITH HUMOR AND PROCEEDED TO GIVE A DISPASSIONATE 50 MINUTE SPEECH.

2. LEVESQUE CLAIMED GROWING SUPPORT FOR AN INDEPENDENT QUEBEC HAVING AN ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION WITH CANADA BASED ON ECONOMIC UNION, WITHOUT THE "STRAIGHTJACKET THE FEDERAL POLITICAL SYSTEM HAS BECOME FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW". HE SAID THAT SELF-DETERMINATION IS AN INEVITABLE "NORMAL AND HEALING CONCLUSION" TO THE DECADES OF YEARNING BY THE PROVINCE'S FRANCOPHONE MAJORITY. LEVESQUE STRONGLY AFFIRMED HIS GOVERNMENT'S LANGUAGE
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POLICIES. HE CALLED THOSE LEAVING QUEBEC BECAUSE OF THE PQ VICTORY "CHILDISH". HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT HE CAN DO LITTLE TO HALT THE EXODUS OF CAPITAL FROM THE PROVINCE BUT SAID THAT "I'M NOT HAVING NIGHTMARES ABOUT IT". LEVESQUE TOLD THE AUDIENCE THAT A REFERENDUM WOULD BE HELD IN QUEBEC "PRETTY SOON". IN A NEWS CONFERENCE AFTER THE SPEECH HE SAID THAT QUEBEC

SEPERATION SHOULD NOT CREATE ANY HARDSHIPS FOR THE MARITIMES BECAUSE IT WOULD MEAN "A CUSTOMS UNION AT THE VERY LEAST."

3. "THE GUARDIAN" OF CHARLOTTETOWN, IN AN EDITORIAL IN THE APRIL 19 EDITION, SAID "LEVESQUE HAS MADE A STRONG CASE WHY QUEBEC SHOULD BE AN INDEPENDENT COUNTRY, AND IT'S A CASE THAT MAY BE HARD TO REFUTE". THE PAPER CALLED HIS SPEECH A "CONVINCING PRESENTATION". THE HALIFAX PAPERS HAVE CARRIED THE SPEECH AS A NEWS ARTICLE BUT HAVE NOT COMMENTED EDITORIALY.

4. WHILE IN CHARLOTTETOWN, LEVESQUE MADE A COURTESY CALL ON PEI PREMIER ALEX CAMPBELL. CAMPBELL WAS QUOTED LATER THAT DAY AS SAYING MR LEVESQUE "COULD PERSUADE MILK OUT OF A COW WITHOUT EVEN TOUCHING IT".

5. COMMENT: THE ATLANTIC PROVINCES SYMPATHIZE WITH SOME OF QUEBEC'S CLAIMS OF ILL TREATMENT BY OTTAWA, HAVING THEMSELVES A NUMBER OF GRIEVANCES AGAINST THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, BUT OPPOSE QUEBEC SEPERATISM, FEARING DISASTEROUS ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES FOR THEIR OWN AREA SHOULD QUEBEC LEAVE THE CONFEDERATION. LEVESQUE RECEIVED AN ATTENTIVE HEARING IN CHARLOTTETOWN BUT, DESPITE THE "GUARDIAN'S" EDITORIAL COMMENTS, DOES NOT SEEM TO HAVE MADE MANY CONVERTS FOR HIS CAUSE.

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